DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 997 CG 025 286

AUTHOR Gardner, Philip D.; Lambert, Stephen
TITLE It's a Hard, Hard, Hard, Hard World!
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Collegiate Employment Research Inst.
PUB DATE Feb 92
NOTE 19p.
AVAILABLE FROM Career Development and Placement Services, Division of Student Affairs and Services, Michigan State University, 113 Student Services Building, East Lansing, MI 48824 ($5).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Counseling; Career Planning; *College Graduates; College Seniors; College Students; Counseling Effectiveness; Higher Education; Information Sources; Job Placement; *Job Satisfaction; *Occupational Information; Program Evaluation; Vocational Adjustment; Young Adults

ABSTRACT

Rapid job turnover and high job dissatisfaction among first-time college-educated employees indicate the maladjustment of graduates to the workplace. A three-phase longitudinal study to explore the match between pre-graduation work expectations and workplace realities surveyed college seniors prior to graduation, 6 months after beginning work, and 1 year after that. The study indicated that students found career-specific information sources, such as personal observation and experience, to give more credible job information than did general information sources such as placement centers. The study indicated that students began work with unrealistic expectations in important areas such as skill variety, the importance of job completion, and the amounts of feedback and autonomy they might reasonably expect. Students were unprepared for the intricacies of organizational socialization, the reality of layoffs and firings, and the frequency of workplace discrimination and harassment. The reality of employment seems to be at odds with the comfortable, nurturing atmosphere of academic institutions and with the adolescent self-image of many students. Internships and career-related work experiences should be strongly encouraged. Job market realities should be introduced, and more realistic previews of jobs should be provided. (CC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 368 997

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P.D. GARDNER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Career Development and Placement Services
Division of Student Affairs and Services
Vernicka K. Tyson
Acting Director
Michigan State University
113 Student Services Building
East Lansing, MI 48824

Copyright: February, 1992

Price: $5.00

MSU is an Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Institution

"My dear, if you would only recognize that life is hard, things would be so much easier for you." ----Justice Brandeis to his daughter (Kaponya, 1990).

As the primary intermediary between college and work, we in career development and placement have an unprecedented view of the playing field. We see successes; how they are achieved and the time and effort they require. We also observe those students who have not been successful or who may have made poor choices out of desperation and have come to regret it. The transition from college to work requires a commitment of time and effort and a realistic set of work expectations.

The senior workshop, often the first time students are appraised of the ins-and-outs of their forthcoming job search, sends waves of anxiety shuddering through the attendees. For many the shock is evident as they realize they are emerging from the cocoon of college life into the vicissitudes and realities of the world of work. This shift dissolves those narrow ground rules of their campus lives. Among college students there's a kind of prolonged adolescence, an age-segregated youth culture. Few provisions have been made to socialize them into adult life. "We're not irresponsible," one student commented, "but all we have to do is get up and go to school. It's not going to be like that again." In addition to the shock of potential unemployment in today's labor market, there is also a real loss of status for some students. Being "in college" has been a self-explanatory status and a laudatory one. Now that they will be out of college, what will they be and how will others (friends, family) view them and how prepared are they for what happens on their first job?

Graduation marks a departure from a lifetime identity as "a student" by opening the doors to adulthood. It may be the first time an individual enters the work world, not as a temporary or part-timer earning tuition, but as a commodity eager for a real job that purports to use those skills and talents developed in school. This step brings with it real suits, real bills, and real doubts; love affairs can be dampened or wedding vows inspired; or a move back to the family home, as a peer among adult equals or a prisoner back from furlough. Regardless of the direction taken, change will be required.

Though not entirely certain on the specifics of these changes, most students intuit correctly that expectations of their behavior and performance will be dramatically altered. They realize, or we inform them, that college has made only minimal demands, regardless of how they may have fulfilled them. Come to class or not, depending upon their instructor. Participate or not (defend, expound, confront, or just sit), depending upon the instructor's style or their own inclinations. (Many students encounter multiple choice tests and pure lectures in class after class, then find interviews and employment correspondence a tremendous strain on their powers of written and verbal communication.) Dress as they like. Meet minimum GPA (grade point average) requirements. Participate in sports and extra curricular activities or not. It would take a very dim senior not to divine that norms for their behavior, personal appearance, punctuality, communication skills, and performance will be radically different once they leave the womb of school and emerge into the world of work.

We all feel deeply satisfied in helping students secure their first jobs. But does that mean we have really done our job? Rapid job turnover and high job dissatisfaction among first time college educated employees serve as indicators to the maladjustment of graduates to the workplace. Do we need to provide seniors with a more realistic picture of work so that a smoother transition can be made? To answer this question, this paper explores evidence from a longitudinal study that monitored early career expectations and experiences. Specific topics include utilization of college acquired skills, socialization into the workplace, job tenure and starting salary expectations, and job search and information seeking strategies. From this discussion, we can ascertain the realities of the college-work transition and discern ways to prepare students more realistically for the workplace.

PARTICIPANTS

A three phase longitudinal study was initiated in the Fall of 1988 to explore the match between pre-graduation work expectations and workplace realities. Approximately, 2,000 seniors were randomly selected and invited to participate in the study. Four hundred and forty (440) completed Phase I some six to eight months prior to graduation. Phase II was completed by 200 participants approximately six months after beginning work. The final phase (III) was returned 12 months later by 150 participants. Because employment starting dates were staggered, the study took approximately three years to complete. Sample mortality (loss of subjects over the separate phases) was primarily due to three factors: (1) inability to find suitable employment, thus causing participants to lose interest in the project (i.e. teachers who had to settle for substitute positions generally dropped out); (2) change of plans that led to graduate school or extended travel, usually caused by a weak job market; or (3) failure to provide an updated mailing address which broke contact with the participant.

Surveys were designed to tap into several expectations and work dimensions across the three phases of the study. In Phase I questions were directed towards demographic information (academic major, career choice, intentions to attend graduate education); job and life expectations (description of ideal first job in terms of tasks, duties and responsibilities, tenure with first employer, frequency or feedback on job performance); sources of career information (amount usage and evaluation of nine possible information sources); and career attitudes and career preparation (anticipatory expectations concerning five aspects of the job, clarity of career goals, career importance). The instrument administered in Phase II repeated many of the measures used in Phase I with the exception of rewording the career information sources section to read sources used in the actual job decision. Additional attention was given details of the position (job description) in order to compare with the ideal job description provided in Phase I. Phase III's survey format repeated most measures from Phases I and II, dropping career and job information sources and adding questions on work experiences (job history, tenure, and experience with discrimination and sexual harassment).

The participants who began Phase I had an average age of 22.8 years and an average grade point average of 2.998. Phase I participants were 60% female and represented a variety of academic majors, especially business, engineering, communication, social sciences and natural sciences. The mix of participants remained consistent across the three phases.

ACQUISITION OF CAREER AND JOB INFORMATION

Students drew upon a wide variety of sources as they gathered information on careers and occupations in those careers. Of the nine listed sources, students reported using coursework (70%), personal experiences (65%), and counselors/teachers/academic advisors (54%) most frequently to learn about occupations. Company representatives (i.e. recruiters) and placement center staff were the least frequently used source (Table 1). An exception was found for engineers and business majors who reported a higher use of the placement center than other majors.

TABLE 1. Frequency with Which Various Sources are Utilized in Formation of Career Goals

Source	% Utilized
Classes/Coursework	72
Personal Experience	65
Counselors/Advisors	54
Friends	51
Parents/Relatives	45
Direct Observation	50
Library	40
Company/Organization Representatives	38
Placement Services	28

Respondents evaluated each source they considered on these four descriptors: (1) credibility (extent to which the source of information provided accurate information); (2) specifity (extent to which the source provided detailed information); (3) breadth (extent to which the source covered a wide variety of topics versus a narrow focus on a few aspects of career or occupation); and (4) importance (extent to which the source's information was important versus trivial). Each characteristic was measured on a five point Lickert rating scale (1 = very little extent to 5 = very great extent). Respondents indicated that the information about their chosen career field was moderately accurate, moderately specific, moderately broad in scope and moderately important (means 3.68, 3.44, 3.60, and 2.93 respectively) for all sources. No noticeable difference was observed among the ratings of the different sources, whose ratings ranged from 3.17 to 4.54. Personal experiences were usually given the highest ratings across all information sources. No reportable differences were found across academic majors.

Differences in usage of available sources were suspected for individuals who had formulated their career plans and those who had not. Career planning reflects the extent to which the student can identify career goals and objectives, how stable and clear these goals are, and

whether the student has a scheme or plan developed for achieving these goals. Based upon the responses to the career planning scale, respondents were grouped either as high career planners (above the median) or low planners. High career planners, those students who were actively involved in planning their careers, were found to utilize more information sources than low planners.

The nine information sources were further sorted into career specific and general sources. Career specific sources tapped information about a particular occupation and even a particular position in an identified organization. These sources include: personal experience, friends, parent/relatives, observation and company/organization representatives. Career specific sources can tailor information for the individual that address specific needs, talents and questions. General career sources which include classes/coursework, counselors/advisors, library and placement center are designed to provide information to groups of people considering a specific occupation or group of occupations. Information provided by general sources does not provide individualized information because these sources tend to be less familiar with the individual.

The means for each of the four evaluation characteristics were compared between career specific and general career sources (Table 2). Significant differences were found in terms of credibility, specificity and importance of information. In all cases, the mean for the career specific source was higher than for the general career source. These differences may reflect implicit assumptions that students hold about the usefulness of the information from a source. It could be that students place a higher value on career specific sources as the end of college nears and awareness that the transition will soon begin. Students will perceive the information from those sources as more credible, specific and important.

TABLE 2. Characteristic Ratings for Career Specific and General Information Sources Prior to Graduation (Mean)

Characteristic	Career Specific	General
Credibility	4.06	3.72**
Specificity	3.79	3.34*
Breadth	3.57	3.49*
Importance	4.06	3.55**

*Significant difference at .05 level.

**Significant difference at .01 level.

In Phase II, respondents were again asked to evaluate the information used to make their job decision on five characteristics: credibility, specificity, scope (breadth), importance, and accuracy. Respondents also rated each information source to the extent which each was able to provide important information about the job they decided to accept. The scales used to evaluate sources ranged from 1 = "very little extent" to 5 = "very great extent."

To a "great extent," the information used in the job decision was perceived to have been credible and accurate. Information was viewed as moderately specific and broad in scope. Respondents also believed that they were made aware of most important information about the job prior to starting their employment (Table 3).

Reviewing the extent to which important information is provided by the nine sources, only two sources stand out as moderately important or better: company/organization representative (mean 2.64) and personal experience (mean 3.15). Removed from the decision process are the sources important in the career formation process, specifically parents/relatives, counselors/academic advisors, and classes. Differences among academic majors were found. Communications, arts and letters, and social science majors relied on their personal experiences to obtain their job information. Education majors directly observed teachers working in the classroom. For business and engineering graduates, company representatives provided the important information; engineers also relied on their personal experiences. Agricultural and natural resource graduates derived their information from counselors, academic advisors, and teachers.

TABLE 3. Evaluation of Information Used in Making a Decision on Which Job to Accept

A. Cumulative Rating of All Sources on Five Characteristics

Credible	3.74	Great Extent
Accurate	3.67	Great Extent
Specific	3.39	Moderate Extent
Broad Scope	3.51	Moderate Extent
Important	2.55	Somewhat

B. Importance of Sources in Providing Information on Your Job (Mean)

Personal Experience	3.15
Company Organization	2.64
Classes	2.49
Observation	2.41
Friends	2.26
Counselors/Academic Advisors	2.04
Parents/Siblings	1.95
Library	1.86
Placement	1.52

Scale: 1 = Very Little Importance to 5 = Extremely Important.

Students are usually counseled to be proactive in their job searches, seeking out as much information as possible about employers before making a decision. It appears, however, that only a small slice of the information available to students is being utilized. A common course finds students often taking the first job offered. "First offer-immediate acceptance" prevailed among college students who had the least information on their jobs and prior work experience according to Glueck (1974). Peer pressure, fear of failure, the need to have something in hand before graduation, apprehension over job availability, and the fear of not being wanted, all conspire to have students choose too quickly after being admonished not to take the first job that comes along.

How often is the lament heard, "I wish I had not taken my first job offer!"; frequently, as comments from several respondents attest. Entrance to the workforce with information from limited sources may force a mismatch between graduates' expectations and workplace realities. In the next sections, these discrepancies will become apparent.

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS

Prior to graduation students are initiated into the statistics of their initial job: starting salary, benefits and often turnover. They have heard that frequent early career changes are possible; but the realities of turnover are seldom discussed. In Phase I, respondents were asked their expectations on several employment characteristics. Actual attainment of these job elements was monitored in the subsequent phases.

As they carried out their job search, respondents estimated that their starting salary would average $21,440. In fact, respondents nearly realized this figure, reporting actual starting salaries to be $20,680. Engineering, education and communication majors generally received the pay they expected. For business, liberal arts (humanities and social science) and agricultural sciences majors starting salaries fell below their expectations. Pushed by nursing and medical technology starting salaries, natural science graduates received higher salaries than they had anticipated. Graduates who entered employment in the service sector were more likely to under estimate starting salaries while technicians, engineers and teachers did better than expected.

Raises were expected to be based primarily on individual performance. After many respondents completed training programs or probationary periods, salaries escalated quickly. Increases over the two year study ranged from 14% to 46%. Strongest gains in salary were reported by liberal arts (humanities and social sciences), and business: those who had reported lower starting salaries than expected. Salary improvement in engineering, natural science and communication occurred at the slowest rates, between 10% and 15%. Engineering and natural science salaries still remained higher overall.

Respondents estimated correctly the number of hours they would work per week. Expecting to work 44.5 hours per week, respondents actually worked 44.5 hours during the first six months on the job; by the end of Phase III, the work week was 43 hours.

Many students expected frequent feedback from supervisors: 20% daily, 35% weekly and 28% monthly. These expectations contrast sharply with the frequency of performance appraisal and feedback currently found in many organizations. Some organizations provide no formal feedback systems and if they did, evaluations would occur annually or bi-annually at best. The discrepancy between graduates' expectations of feedback and organizational feedback policies will be explored in the following section; the lack of evaluation proved to be a major adjustment for graduates.

As they ventured into their first job, respondents expected to remain with their first employer for three years (36 months). By the end of approximately twenty-four months, only 46% of the Phase III participants were still with their first employer. Of those participants who changed employers, their average tenure with their first employer lasted 11 months. Only 36% were in the position they accepted upon entry into the organization. For those individuals who were promoted or moved to new positions, average tenure in their first position was 12 months.

Turnover can occur quickly, often within months of starting work and certainly by the end of the first year, if work conditions have not improved. Dissatisfaction with the job, inability to socialize into the organization, and office politics all contribute to an early exit from the organization. Early job changes may not always be salutary. Changes may be lateral, they may mean a slip down, or they may present a crisis of self-esteem for which the graduate is ill-prepared to handle. Changes are certainly not advantageous to an employer. Factors that may prompt a new employee to exit the organization will be explored next.

THE JOB

Frustration often etches on senior faces as they mold their college major, skills and experiences into a "job." How this happens often is served as a slap in the face. Certainly the lofty standards so carefully cultivated on campus are challenged. As the student seeking a position which coordinates corporate meetings or industry conventions opines: "I know I'm going to make zero money. I'll make more money waitressing than in my job." Though she intends to pursue an M.B.A., she concedes that her aspirations have changed during her senior year. "All through school, I thought I'd have a job and this brilliant career the day after graduation." Neither have come to pass; so she traveled to Europe during the summer and then played the next several months by ear. Many recruiters caution not to overstate the excitement and wonder of the first job. Quite often this job is mired in training, routinization and little individual control that could create real dissonance unless realistically prepared.

In Phase I respondents rated 29 job characteristics which may be encountered in their work. The scale (ranging from 1 "little" to 5 "great") asked to what extent they expected the characteristic or how much they thought it would occur. In subsequent phases, the items were repeated, rephrasing the scale to extent or amount that actually appeared in their positions. The 29 items were combined into four measures: skill variety, task completion, feedback and autonomy. Comparing their expectations before leaving campus with the job held two years later still revealed startling differences between expectations and reality.

Students hoped to be able to use a wide variety of skills in their first job and receive feedback from supervisors on a regular basis (Table 4). They felt they would not be held responsible for completion of entire tasks, rather completing tasks initiated by others or beginning tasks that would be completed by others. Neither did they expect to have autonomy over how they undertook an assignment, anticipating guidance and procedures from their supervisors.

TABLE 4. Extent to Which Job Met Expectations on Content (Mean)

	FEMALE		MALE	
	Phase I Expected	Phase III Actual	Phase I Expected	Phase III Actual
Skill Variety	4.04	3.13	3.96	3.09
Task Completion	3.31	3.99	3.29	4.05
Feedback	3.80	3.33	3.73	3.30
Autonomy	3.45	3.89	3.28	3.82

Scale: 1 = Very Little to 5 = Very Great.

After two years and even after moving into new positions, the job remained mundane, felt unchallenging and required few skills. Feedback occurred sporadically at best and self-evaluation became an important element in judging performance. Work was not without its surprises, however. Respondents reported being responsible for the completion of entire tasks, rather than pieces, and having wide latitude (autonomy) in how tasks were to be completed.

Education and liberal arts majors reported a closer match between expectations and actual job characteristics with the exception of skill variety. Business, communication and social science majors had the largest discrepancy across all four characteristics. Comparing the four characteristics by job title, technicians and engineers indicated a better match between expectations and actual job experience. Engineers were disappointed, however, that more skill variety was not required of them. Respondents in managerial, professional, and business occupations reported major differences in their expectations and their job requirements.

THE COMMUNITY OF WORK

A job is more than simply a set of tasks to be performed. It involves a place which implies the presence of a community. Even with the ideal job, individual success can not be assured. Graduates returning for a campus visit exclaim, "You never mentioned the politics!" Organizational politics, language, performance standards, and goals weave together an intricate pattern of formal and informal policies and practices whose nuances can defeat even the very best technically trained students. Socialization requires new organizational entrants to learn the organization's patterns to become members of the work community.

At each phase of the study, organizational socialization was measured by a set of 34 items that represented five underlying aspects of organizational membership: organizational politics, organizational goals, interpersonal relationships with supervisor and co-workers, performance or expectations, and cultural language. In the first phase, the selected wording referred to the respondents' expectations for socialization on a five point "disagree - agree" scale. The "disagree - agree" scale was also used in the second and third phases where items referenced the actual situation in each time period.

Looking back from the third time period, highly socialized respondents had high expectant socialization scores; likewise poorly socialized individuals reported low expectant socialization scores. Women were likely to be socialized more highly than men (Table 5). Regardless of the characteristics used to compare respondents, new graduates had a difficult time hearing or seeing the indirect messages regarding politics, goals and performance. On numerous occasions, respondents commented on difficulties working with supervisors or co-workers.

TABLE 5. Percentage Lowly Socialized on Five Organizational Characteristics

Characteristics	% Men	% Women
Politics	70	56
Goals	74	53
Interpersonal Relations	74	56
Performance - Expectations	60	49
Language	56	48

Interesting findings appeared when respondents were grouped by current occupational category. One particular group that stood out was educators. This group reported high task compatibility and mastery of required technical skills; however, they were poorly socialized. Frustration was evident over district politics (school boards and committees), district goals (districts changing academic focus), interpersonal relationships (from superintendent to parents) and performance standards (unwritten rules and parent expectations). In another interesting comparison, women in management positions were found to be highly socialized across all five dimensions while men in similar positions struggled with organizational goals and interpersonal relationships.

Summarizing the socialization process, individuals in technical positions tended to be poorly socialized across people related dimensions. Men were more likely to have difficulty with goals and performance. Women worried more about understanding office politics. Office politics can seriously affect the motivation of employees, especially when it materializes in terms of harassment or discrimination; topics discussed further below.

Even if an individual has satisfactorily socialized into the work community, membership can be lost quickly. Firings and layoffs are a very real part of work; yet, new entrants to the labor market fail to heed this reality. In fact, we seldom want to "rain on their parade." One

respondent put it bluntly, "Unemployment is a reality." Consider the accountant with a major accounting firm whose position was eliminated, "Being terminated from a job gets you to reality. You under-go in-depth self analysis." Loss of membership can be a debilitating loss of self worth, regardless of the individual's skills. Student awareness of the possible loss of employment early in their careers should be increased.

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Underlying the frustrations over dealing with office politics, women (primarily) felt that their gender had much to do with how they were accepted into the organization. These topics have grabbed the headlines recently; their occurrence, nonetheless, is real. The young women in this study expressed surprise and anger that harassment and discrimination began immediately upon entry into the organization. Over 30% of these respondents (all but two were women) have experienced or observed harassment or discrimination in the work place.

Their comments offer examples of the type of harassment women typically face. Requests for sexual favors from supervisors were common; sales positions increased the incidence of harassment as clients often placed sexual prerequisites on orders. The most persistent forms of male co-worker abuse were name calling and sexual innuendoes. One women summed up several observations by stating her company "was not specific about roles of women within the organization."

Women in this study reacted to harassment in several ways. Typically they quit their jobs and sought other employment. Others remained silent, hoping the problem would go away. Several in this situation regretted not speaking up and complained about being uncomfortable when the males in question were around. A few who could find support within the company fought harassment and improved their situation. In most of these latter cases, the women remained with their employer.

Discrimination manifested in several ways, usually in the failure to communicate information to women when all the males in the unit received it; an unwillingness to accept women's abilities as equivalent to men, which made women work harder just to stay even; failure to take women seriously, resulting in missed opportunities; or dismissal of women for the lack of career ambitions. One woman engineer spoke for many others: "My first boss hated me on-site from day one. He made sexist remarks regularly. It is difficult to be female because you have to act "male" to be accepted but many men are offended if you do not act "female." Traditional females are belittled."

TABLE 6. Selected Comments from Respondents on Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace.

Harassment:

- Males dominate the area in which I work and they don't take me seriously. A supervisor said I dressed too sexy at times and I should "Put a bag over myself" to keep him from looking at me. (juvenile surveillance officer)
- Owner made very aggressive sexual advances. (restaurant manager)
- Man made a pass at me and assumed I would say yes to his sexual advances including intercourse. (teacher)
- Boss told me I would never advance unless I became involved with him. (retail sales manager)
- Male co-worker constantly remarks on my anatomy or lack of it; has a problem working with women. (designer)
- Customer held up purchase order because I would not go out on a date. (sales)

Discrimination:

- Older men sending information to my boss and peers but not females. Don't see women as engineers. (engineer)
- My female supervisor was replaced by a male who believes women have no career aspirations or ability. (retail sales manager)
- Have been passed up for responsibilities because I am not male and I am not paid as a male in my position. (account executive)
- Disappointed to learn how women, especially young women, are treated with old fashioned attitudes. I consider myself very professional and mature and don't appreciate being called "hun" or "honey." (bank trainee)
- Boss continually tells racial jokes. (sales)

ADJUSTING THE IDEAL CAREER

As individuals adjust to the dynamics of the job market, career plans are often modified to take into account work realities. To capture the degree to which career plans were altered after beginning work, respondents were asked to detail their "ideal career" as they envisioned it prior to Phase I. In Phase III, respondents were asked to describe their "current career." Details on their ideal career were provided as prompts so that respondents could rate how well their current job matched both their ideal and current career definitions.

Table 7 provides the mean scores obtained from a scale where 1 = very little extent and 5 = very great extent with 3 = moderate extent. Their jobs moderately matched their ideal career. Differences were observed across college (representing academic major) and occupations. Engineers, teachers, natural scientists (nurses and lab technicians), and agricultural scientists felt that their jobs matched their ideal careers to a "great extent." Social science graduates were less enthusiastic about their match.

TABLE 7. Rating of Current Position to "Ideal" Career Defined at Graduation and "Current" Career as Presently Defined (Mean)

	Ideal Career Comparison	Current Career Comparison
Gender:		
Men	3.39	3.96
Women	3.35	3.87
College:		
Agriculture	3.73	4.36
Business	3.19	3.83
Engineering	3.94	4.12
Human Ecology	3.56	3.78
Natural Sciences	3.77	4.23
Education	3.83	4.33
Communications	3.17	3.70
Arts and Letters	3.17	3.83
Social Sciences	2.82	3.27
Position		
Manager	3.13	3.72
Business	3.33	3.85
Engineering	3.50	3.75
Professional (other)	3.58	4.00
Technical	3.33	4.33
Education	3.91	4.36
Service	3.42	3.92

Scale: 1 = Very Little Extent to 5 = Very Great Extent.

The match between job and career improved when the comparison was made with current career definition. Women reported a slightly better match than men. The largest improvement in match was observed in agricultural/natural resources, business and education majors; or for individuals in managerial, business, and technical occupations. Less improvement in their match was found for human ecology and humanities majors and those individuals still in engineering positions. Overall, adjustments in career plans resulted in a better match between current employment and career aspirations. (Analysis continues as to the type of adjustments that were made and whether the direction of aspirations was lower than the ideal.)

RETHINKING WHAT WE DO

Throughout the senior year, we provide workshops, develop resumes and counsel students on job search strategies. All too quickly graduation approaches; then with a brief hand shake, and a sincere "good luck," graduates are sent off to some hopefully indulgent parents and possibly a job. So begins their early ricocheting about the job market, as graduates undergo their own conditioning process. Pre-employment job expectations are brought into line with reality. Socialization skills and work ethics are acquired and career plans are refocused. Can and should we do more to assist in this transition than keep busy with workshops, one-on-one counseling, and resume clinics?

To recognize and convey the realities of the workplace, rather than to excuse or soften their presence, is an important aspect of what we do. Astin asserts that "students learn by becoming involved (1985)." A first step would be to inoculate students with a sense of reality by encouraging internships, co-operative education and other career related work experiences among students and faculty. These opportunities may not reveal all job aspects, as student teaching serves as an example of the neglect of socialization skills; still they would provide realistic previews of what work will be like.

"Reality counseling" can be incorporated into existing career counseling models. In workshops and counseling sessions, job market realities should be introduced. While some students may deny their existence or avoid dealing with the common set of experiences, most students will sift through the information as they frame their search strategies. Since placement counselors are not used frequently by many students in their career planning or job search preparation, allies among faculty, alumni, employers, and parents need to be nurtured.

Wanous (1981) has called for employers to provide more realistic previews of jobs: required tasks, work environment, training opportunities, and evaluation strategies. In order to provide previews, employers may need to better understand the aspirations and needs of the graduates they are recruiting. Restructuring their work environment and upgrading the skills required in entry level positions to meet these needs and desires could result in better retention of new employees.

More drastic measures may be needed. Richard Bolles at a recent conference (MCPA Fall Conference, 1991) suggested that motivating students to undertake a job search may be wasted energy. Students will truly listen to you once they have "hit the wall" or become completely frustrated in their job search. After graduates have caromed about the job market for six

office may not belong on campus. It's at odds with the mission of education; it's at odds with the nurturing, comfortable atmosphere of most academic institutions; and it's at odds with the adolescent self-image many students give themselves.

Students have changed, social conditions have been altered and the economic situation continues its volatile course. However we choose to address these factors, we need to stand firm and continue to assert the realities of the job market to our students. Frequent excursions and explorations of the world outside academics and a career development model more inextricable woven into the fabric of institutional life will assist to help students make constant and realistic connections between who they are, what they know, and what they need to learn.

REFERENCES

Astin, A. 1985. Achieving Educational Excellence: A Critical Assessment of Priorities and Practices in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Glueck, W.F. 1974. "Decision Making: Organizational Choice." Personnel Psychology, 27, pp. 77-93.

Kaponya, Paul. 1990. How to Survive Your First 90 Days at a New Company. Hawthorne, NJ: The Career Press. p. 155.

Wanous, J. P. 1980. Organizational Entry: Recruitment, Selection, and Socialization of Newcomers. Menlo Park, CA: Addision - Wesley Publishing Company.

The Collegiate Employment Research Institute was established by Michigan's Legislature in 1984. The Institute is charged with the task of examining issues on career development and employment for college graduates. Various projects are underway, including the study covered in this report, to provide information to educators and counselors for program development. If you have any questions on this study or any Institute project, please contact the Institute directly.

Vernicka K. Tyson
Acting Director
Career Development and Placement Services

L. Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Career Development and Placement Services;
Director of the Institute

Philip D. Gardner, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Career Development and Placement Services;
Research Administrator of the Institute

Collegiate Employment Research Institute
Career Development and Placement Services
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

Collegiate Employment Research Institute
Career Development and Placement Services
113 Student Services Building
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1113

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
E. Lansing, MI
PERMIT NO. 21

MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer